

To: Connecticut General Assembly

Re: SB 1051

From: Janice Gionfriddo, Middletown Registrar of Voters

I present this information as a 16 year Registrar of Voters and as a member of ROVAC.

We strive as Registrars to operate our offices in an impartial manner. More importantly, we work diligently to insure that our elections are run fairly, efficiently and in accordance with the Statutes of our state. I state this not to pat ourselves on the back, but to indicate to you that this is the manner in which the Registrars of 169 Connecticut towns strive to operate each and every year.

We hold elections in 169 towns. Yet, we find ourselves here today debating a complete overhaul of the state elections process in large part due to the difficulties of one particular group of Registrars in one community. What happened in Hartford last November should never have happened if the procedures and process already in our statutes had been followed. In this community, in this election, they were not. We had no such difficulties, however, in 168 other communities. Do we scrap an entire system that works to correct the egregious mistakes of one? Talk about throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Our current system provides for a fair, politically balanced election process. The system proposed in SB 1051 will be run by one Registrar, appointed by a political legislative body. We certainly cannot expect that in all cases, we will get a non-partisan appointee with the best credentials to be the Registrar. Further, the Registrar will be reporting to the Town Clerk, who in many towns and communities is also an elected official nominated by his or her political party. That is not a problem in the normal duties of a Town Clerk, but politics could rear its head when they take on these additional election responsibilities. I would like to state however, that we in Middletown have an outstanding report with our Town Clerk and have always worked well together with duties required by both. I choose to not even substantively comment on the issue of Registrars that do not get along. In 169 organizations, personality issues will always occur in a very few. Other than Hartford, where have these issues damaged the electoral process.

Every system, no matter how well it runs, can be improved upon. What is not necessary, however, is a gutting of the system. We can simply insure that all Registrars will continue receive the training at conferences that we need to properly conduct an election and the day to day operation of our offices. The training insures a standard applicable to all cities and towns.

Again, I strongly recommend the rejection of the major overhauls suggested in SB 1051. They are an overreaction to a problem that does not affect 99% of our communities. It is a rush to appear to correct a problem that truly does not exist. Let us take a more reasoned approach to improving our electoral process- adding additional training as necessary and further review.

Janice Gionfriddo